

Elise C. Breitfeld
breitfeld@wisc.edu | 919.357.8720
Psychology Department
University of Wisconsin-Madison

EDUCATION

2020 – Present	University of Wisconsin-Madison <i>Ph.D. in Developmental Psychology, expected May 2026</i> <i>M.S. in Developmental Psychology, 2022</i>
2016 – 2020	Princeton University <i>B.A. in Psychology</i> Summa cum laude Certificates: Cognitive Science, Linguistics, and Neuroscience

GRANTS AND FELLOWSHIPS

2024 – 2026	F31 NICHD Fellowship (F31HD115328): Environmental Context in Early Semantic Network Development
2023 – 2024	Wisconsin Distinguished Graduate Fellowship – Waisman Center, University of Wisconsin-Madison
2020 – 2021	University Fellowship – University Wisconsin-Madison
2019	Princeton Cognitive Science Undergraduate Summer Research Fellowship
2017 & 2018	Pitts Undergraduate Research Fund Award – Princeton University

HONORS AND AWARDS

2024	UW-Madison Award for Mentoring Undergraduates in Research, Scholarly, and Creative Activities
2023	Psychology Department Distinguished Service Award – University of Wisconsin-Madison
2022	Society for Language Development Student Award
2020	Howard Crosby Warren Senior Prize in Psychology – Princeton University
2019	Phi Beta Kappa Honors Society
2019	Howard Crosby Warren Junior Prize in Psychology – Princeton University
2017	Shapiro Prize for Academic Excellence – Princeton University

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

2020 – Present	Infant Learning Lab Ph.D. Candidate <i>University Wisconsin-Madison</i> Advisor: Dr. Jenny Saffran
2017 – 2020	Princeton Baby Lab Honors Thesis Student <i>Princeton University</i> Advisor: Dr. Casey Lew-Williams
2018	Bergelson Lab Research Assistant <i>Duke University</i> Advisor: Dr. Elika Bergelson
2017	Developmental Social Neuroscience Lab Research Assistant <i>University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill</i> Advisor: Dr. Eva Telzer
2015	Wilbourn Infant Lab Research Assistant <i>Duke University</i> Advisor: Dr. Makeba Wilbourn

PUBLICATIONS

Published	Breitfeld, E. & Saffran, J. (2025). Environmental context scaffolds children's semantic representation of novel words. <i>Cognition</i> , 262, 106162.
-----------	---

Breitfeld, E., *Compton, A., & Saffran, J. (2024). Toddlers' prior social experience with speakers influences their word learning. *Infancy*, 29(5), 771-788.

* Student mentee, co-first author

Breitfeld, E. & Saffran, J. (2024). Early word learning is influenced by physical environments. *Child Development*, 93(3), 962-971.

Breitfeld, E., Potter, C., & Lew-Williams, C. (2021). Children simultaneously learn multiple dimensions of information during shared book reading. *Journal of Cognition and Development*, 22(5), 744-766.

Garrison, H., Baudet, G., **Breitfeld, E.**, & Bergelson, E. (2020). Familiarity plays a small role in noun comprehension at 12-18 months. *Infancy*, 25(4), 458-477.

In Prep

Breitfeld, E., *Snoberger, C., & Saffran, J. (in prep). The impact of peer behavior on preschoolers' word learning.

* Student mentee, co-first author

Breitfeld, E. & Saffran, J. (in prep). Environmental context as a cue to toddlers' semantic associations between words.

Breitfeld, E. & Saffran, J. (in prep). Environmental context as a cue to broad category labels.

Breitfeld, E. & Saffran, J. (in prep). Individual differences in toddlers' word-context associations and semantic knowledge.

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

Talks

Breitfeld, E. & Saffran, J. (2024). Environmental context scaffolds children's semantic representations of novel words. Talk presented at *Boston University Conference on Language Development*: Boston, MA.

***Breitfeld, E.**, **Compton, A., & Saffran, J. (2024). Toddlers' prior social experience with speakers influences word learning. Talk presented in Symposium "Examining the socioemotional dynamics of early language learning" at *International Congress of Infant Studies*: Glasgow, Scotland.

* Symposium Chair

** Student mentee, co-first author

Breitfeld, E. & Saffran, J. (2022). Physical environments that highlight objects' distinct features support word learning. Talk presented at *Boston University Conference on Language Development*: Boston, MA.

Posters

Breitfeld, E., LaTourette, A., Waxman, S. & Saffran, J. (2025). The effect of category composition on infants' memory of object features. Poster at *Society for Research in Child Development 2025 Biennial Meeting*: Minneapolis, MN.

*Franco, X., **Breitfeld, E.** & Saffran, J (2025). The role of category formation in how infants distinguish between object features. Poster at *National Conference on Undergraduate Research*: Pittsburgh, PA.

* Student mentee

Breitfeld, E. & Saffran, J. (2024). The role of environmental context in scaffolding children's word meanings. Poster at *Cognitive Development Society Biennial Meeting*: Pasadena, CA.

Breitfeld, E. & Saffran, J. (2022). Word learning in environments that highlight distinct features of objects. Poster at *International Congress of Infant Studies*: Ottawa, CA.

Breitfeld, E., Weaver, H., & Lupyan, G. (2022). Parent generic language input about categories in a sample of North American English. Poster at *Cognitive Development Society 2022 Biennial Meeting*: Madison, WI.

Breitfeld, E., Potter, C., & Lew-Williams, C. (2019). Investigating children's learning at multiple levels from shared reading. Poster at *Cognitive Development Society 2019 Biennial Meeting*: Louisville, KY.

INVITED TALKS

2025

Social and Moral Learning Lab, University of Wisconsin-Madison

2022

Infant and Child Development Center, Northwestern University

Cognitive Origins Lab, University of Wisconsin-Madison

TEACHING

2025 – 2026

Instructor, Psychology of Language (Psych 601)

2024

Teaching Assistant, Research Methods (Psych 225)

2022, 2023

Teaching Assistant, Child Development (Psych 460)

Guest Lecture: Early Word Learning

MENTORING & OUTREACH EXPERIENCE

Mentorship	2025 – 2026	McNair Scholar: <i>Howard Owens</i>
	2025 – 2026	Honors Thesis Student: <i>Howard Owens</i>
	2024 – 2025	Center for Educational Opportunity Scholar: <i>Ximena Franco</i>
	2024 – 2025	Honors Thesis Student: <i>Courtney Snoberger</i>
	2024	Honors Summer Research Apprentice: <i>Amari Talluri-Boye</i>
	2023	Honors Summer Research Apprentice: <i>Rayane Prado Nunes</i>
	2023	MMSD High School Science Research Internship Mentor
	2023	UW-Madison LASER Student: <i>Howard Owens</i>
	2022 – 2023	Undergraduate Research Scholar: <i>Rayane Prado Nunes</i>
	2021 – 2022	Honors Thesis Student: <i>Anna Compton</i>
	2021	Talaria Summer Research Institute Mentor
Outreach	2025	UnityPoint Health Meriter Baby Hour, Guest Speaker on infant language learning
	2020-2025	Early Childhood Program Lead Teacher, UW Odyssey Project, Odyssey Junior

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

2021 – 2023	Psychology Department Climate and Diversity Committee
2021 – 2024	Symposium on Research in Child Language Disorders (SRCLD) Committee
2020 – 2024	Psychology Department Colloquium Series Committee, Chair (2021-2023)

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

Cognitive Development Society
International Congress of Infant Studies
Society for Language Development
Society for Research in Child Development